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ABSTRACT

Developing students' ability to use multicultural perspectives and knowledge to think about literature, history, and society is emerging as an important part of a pluralistic approach to education. In New York State, an ethnographic study was conducted over 2 school years by a pair of English and social studies teachers with pluralistic goals for curriculum and pedagogy; a case study of one female student was embedded within the study. The interdisciplinary classroom context evolved into a democratic classroom culture where difference became valued. Reading texts from different cultural perspectives, engaging in open-forum discussion and writing, and participating in other dialectical activities fostered student awareness of the multiple, sometimes conflicting languages for understanding texts and social issues. Participation in the class influenced individual students differently in their response or resistance. The female student in the case study moved from a profound silence that she told the class came from being abused as a child, to an anger toward social injustice and apathy, to attempts to understand the causes/effects of injustice, and finally, to recognition of herself as an agent of social change. Her personal engagement-involvement with literature and biographical stories prompted deep emotional awareness which energized her transformation as seen in her discussion and writing--a story which comes out as she engages in the critically reflective dialogues of the class, discovers the power of her own voice, and creates a connected way of knowing. (Contains 38 references.) (NKA)

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National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement

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A Case Study of Learning in an Integrated Literature-History Class: Personal Narrative, Critical Reflection, and Kris's Ways of Knowing

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ABSTRACT

Developing students' ability to use multicultural perspectives and knowledge to think about literature, history and society is emerging as an important part of a pluralistic approach to education. The case study reported on here is embedded in an ethnographic study of three innovative eleventh-grade literature-history classes (Miller, 1997) as they were negotiated over two school years by a pair of English and social studies teachers with pluralistic goals for curriculum and pedagogy. The interdisciplinary classroom context evolved into a democratic classroom culture where difference became valued. Reading texts from different cultural perspectives, engaging in open-forum discussion and writing, and participating in other dialectical activities fostered student awareness of the multiple, sometimes conflicting languages for understanding texts and social issues. Participation in the class influenced individual students differently, depending on numerous personal and sociocultural forces shaping the nature of their active response or resistance. Kris, a white female student in the class, moved from a profound silence that she told the class was born of being abused as a child, to an anger toward social injustice and apathy, to attempts to understand the causes and effects of injustice, and, finally, to recognition of herself as an agent of social change. Her personal engagement-involvement with literature and biographical stories prompted deep emotional awareness which energized her transformation as seen in her discussion and writing. Using a framework for explaining women's developing ways of knowing (Belenky et al., 1986), we tell Kris's story as she engages in the critically reflective dialogues of the class, discovers the power of her own voice, and creates a connected way of knowing.

INTRODUCTION: AN EMBEDDED CASE STUDY

Recent analysis of literacy and literature instruction (Miller & McCaskill, 1993) support the argument that pluralistic approaches to education require changes in curricular content to include voices of cultural groups who have been excluded from literary study in schools. Theoretically, multicultural literatures provide the natural forum where readers encounter the "lived experiences" of others' diverse perspectives, thus offering "alternative vantage points on the world" (Greene, 1993). In this view, multicultural literatures (e.g., Latino/a, African American, Native American and Asian texts and authors) can provide opportunities for meeting many goals of multicultural education, where voices interact and students reflect, think critically, increase cultural awareness, decrease ethnocentrism, and create a global perspective (e.g., Banks, 1993; Harris, 1993; Sleeter & Grant, 1994).

However, studies of the status of the literature curriculum in the United States suggest that although more works by non-white men and women have been included in the most recent literature anthologies, only 21 percent of the works teachers reported using were written by women and 16 percent by non-white authors (Applebee, 1993). Further, the addition of cultural information and multicultural literary texts to the curriculum, by itself, appears to be insufficient for developing pluralistic understandings and attitudes (e.g., Adams, 1995). Research on classroom practice suggests that simply adding multicultural texts to curriculum poses problems, because students have difficulties making sense of literary texts written from cultures other than their own due, in part, to insufficient cultural information or resistance to other than mainstream perspectives (e.g., Beach, 1994, 1996; Sharma Knippling, 1993; Purves & Jordan, 1993). Teachers and researchers have begun to argue that students limited by narrow cultural perspectives need to engage in discussion, writing, and other dialectical activities supported by knowledgeable teachers who prompt examination of knowledge construction from multiple cultural perspectives (Banks, 1993, 1995; Miller, 1992, 1993; Muhammad, 1993; Purves, 1993; Sharma Knippling, 1993). Developing students' ability to *use* cultural knowledge and perspectives to think about literature, history, society *and themselves* is emerging as a necessary part of a pluralistic approach to education.

The case study of Kris is embedded in an ethnographic study that addressed these issues by examining the consequences of interdisciplinary study of literature-history in classes where students had opportunities to reflect about multicultural texts in their historical contexts through open-forum discussion, writing, and other dialectical activities which emphasized thinking critically about perspectives (Miller, 1997). Kris was an eleventh-grade student in this context, an integrated American history-literature class with pluralistic goals for instruction and curriculum.

One of the ten volunteer focal students selected with teacher help, Kris told Miller in the final interview that participating in the integrated class had changed her life. The analysis presented here emerged over the following year as Trzyna engaged in content analysis of Kris's journals and interviews in the context of our research group collaboratively analyzing case-study data. Our goal was to understand what happened to Kris and her ways of knowing over the course of the year, through her participation in the integrated class.

CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

Data for the project included field notes, classroom artifacts, Kris's response journal and writing folders, transcriptions of interviews with Kris, interviews with teachers, interpretive field notes and transcriptions, and anecdotal notes from class lessons. Kris was a member of a largely white heterogeneous class integrated for study of U.S. History and English in Lakeview High School, located in a suburban school district in New York State. A more detailed description of the site, teachers (Sharon and Ron), methods, and findings from the ethnographic study can be found in Miller (1997).

Field notes, transcriptions of interviews, curriculum artifacts, observation notes or transcriptions of classroom lessons, and all of Kris's writings were recursively analyzed (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) for evidence of relevant factors in Kris's developing thinking and ways of knowing. We focused on a descriptive narrative account of Kris's ways of knowing (Erickson, 1982) and included relevant factors in the developing contexts which affected Kris's response to texts and her critical reflection.

Initially, Trzyna read and annotated this material with several general questions and ideas in mind: What changes do we detect in her writing, her class participation, and her interpretation of what she observes in the classroom? What themes occur and recur in Kris's writing and how are they interrelated? Finally, what happens to Kris when she is allowed to voice opinions that are not mainstream?

In all, we were curious to know if the multicultural theme in the dialogic context of this integrated class, particularly the articulation of previously silenced voices and marginalized perspectives, influenced Kris's ways of thinking. As we read her journals, essays, and transcripts of class lessons in which she participated, we began to see clear themes. For example, she showed over time an increased awareness of and concurrent anger over issues of social injustice and social apathy; she had very strong opinions about the causes and effects of these issues. In the dialectic between Kris's work and the relevant theory and research we saw patterns that

suggested a movement through women's ways of knowing as described by Mary Belenky (Ashton-Jones & Thomas, 1990), a researcher in the area of intellectual development.

In the next section, we give an overview of the findings from Belenky's work (Belenky et al., 1986; Ashton-Jones & Thomas, 1990), which provided an explanatory framework for this case analysis. But first, we review the theoretical and research background for our particular interest in Kris as an active female participant in the integrated class who described herself as a non-participant in previous classes.

NARRATIVE THINKING AND WOMEN'S WAYS OF KNOWING

Narrative and Dialogue

According to recent feminist critiques, conceptions of knowledge and truth historically have been defined by a male-dominated majority culture (Lewis, 1993; Gilligan, 1982; Rich, 1979). These models have most often excluded the notion that knowledge can be constructed as a function of personal experience or stories. As a result, educational institutions have generally not attended to methods of learning and understanding that may be more valued by women. Recently, for example, there has been much written about the link between change in women's lives and the power of dialogue and narrative (Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Belenky et al., 1986). Feminist theory and pedagogy have begun to explore the relevance of the personal narrative as a tool that encourages dialogue and values previously silenced voices, as well as critiques dominant models of knowledge and authority (Helle, 1991). Although these theorists believe, as we do, that the power of personal narrative is especially significant in women's intellectual development, there is no suggestion of one "correct" way of knowing.

One well articulated view of the power of story posits a kind of narrative thinking as a alternative or complement to logical, analytical thinking. Entering into dialogue to understand others' stories involves perceiving, feeling, thinking and acting as a unified "self in transaction" (Bruner, 1986, p. 69), allowing in the whole self, not circumscribed by boundaries. Such aesthetic response and reflection can act against our tendency to "intellectualize" understanding of, for example, oppression and injustice, by distancing self, making detached reports, or instructing others what to do (Sleeter, 1993). As Bruner (1986) describes the power of the story, it produces an alternative to intellectualizing, in a kind of narrative thinking dealing with human intention and action, the psychic reality of the particulars of experience.

According to Belenky and her colleagues (1986), valuing such thinking is important because "our basic assumptions about the nature of truth and reality and the origins of knowledge shape the way we see the world and ourselves as participants in it. They affect our definitions of ourselves, the way we interact with others, our public and private personae, our sense of control over life events, our views of teaching and learning, and our conceptions of morality" (p. 3). Learning and knowing in the integrated class meant entering into texts and conversation, which meant being drawn into listening to others' voices, or as one teacher said, letting people "get to your heart." Such perspective-taking through a feeling/thinking dialogue with the text and others formed the center of narrative thinking in the class. Students and teachers together encouraged each student to live through the times/ the places/ the experiences. Kris was among those students who felt these lives personally and, in dialogue with the play of voices in these texts, was transformed by new knowing.

Women's Ways of Knowing

In a research project that began in the late 1970s, Belenky and colleagues (1986) conducted extensive interviews with 135 women of different ages, class and ethnic backgrounds, and educational histories. They were interested in the individual experience of each woman as a way to understand women's experience in general. They explored with these women their experiences and problems as learners and knowers. They adopted a case study approach to the interviews in order to "Hear what the women had to say in their own terms rather than test our own preconceived hypotheses.... We proceeded inductively, opening our ears to the voices and perspectives of women so that we might begin to hear the unheard and unimagined" (p. 11).

The result of their work, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (1986), succinctly described the ways of knowing that women value and the development of women's voice. Based on an analysis of the interviews, they grouped these ways into five major epistemological perspectives: 1) silence; 2) received knowledge; 3) subjective knowledge; 4) procedural knowledge; and 5) constructed knowledge.

Movement through these perspectives, or ways of knowing, is directly connected to a woman's personal experience and relationship to the world and the self-perception that is an effect of this experience. In addition, these perspectives change as a woman's search for an understanding of self leads to an enhanced development of a critical, reflective voice. For example, one of the women interviewed for the study talked about her childhood and early adult years as a time when she viewed the world from the perspective of the silent woman. "I had

trouble talking. If I tried to explain something and someone told me that it was wrong, I'd burst into tears over it. I'd just fall apart" (p. 23). The birth of her children represented a major turning point in her life and a concurrent shift into a new way of knowing. Because she felt responsible for the adequate care of her children, she had to reassess herself as a knower. At a children's health center, she actively pursued information about how to be a good parent, and because she understood and utilized the things she learned there, she began to think of herself as a learner. This woman had successfully made the shift from silence to received knower.

It seems to be the case for many women, if not most, that life events or changes serve as catalysts for growth and initiate shifts through the five categories of knowing. A summary of these phases follows.

Five Perspectives on Knowing

Silence. The poet Audre Lord spoke of this perspective on knowing: "My work is to inhabit the silences with which I have/lived and fill them with myself until they have the/sounds of brightest day and the loudest thunder." According to Belenkey et al. (1986), silent women "believe that the source of self-knowledge is lodged in others -- not in the self" (p.31). In their interviews with silent women, there was no indication of a dialogue with "the self" or an awareness of introspection. These women exhibit unquestioned submission to the immediate commands of authorities, not to the directives of their own inner voices. "The silent women see life in terms of polarities. Everything is either big or little, good or bad, win or lose" (p. 30).

They also found that one theme is particularly common to women at this stage: "words were perceived as weapons." That is, in their experience, words were used to diminish and separate people. Women in abusive relationships were afraid to speak because, when they did, it often resulted in physical violence or the threat of violence. Silent women were afraid that they would be punished for using words. Most silenced women eventually make the shift to a healthier perspective.

The received knower. Unlike the silent women who are not aware of words as a way to transmit knowledge, women who rely on received knowledge believe that words are central to the process of knowing. However, words are dualistic; they represent either right or wrong, good or bad, true or false. They assume that there is only one right answer to each question, and all other answers are wrong. Received knowers have little confidence in their own ability to speak and believe that truth comes from others. They will silence their own voices to hear the voices of others, and they

equate receiving, retaining, and returning the words of authorities with learning. Received knowers have no conception of *understanding* an idea as central to learning it. In a complex and pluralistic world such as ours, this reliance on authority for a single view of the truth is inefficient. As she experiences increasing frustration at her inability to find the source of growth and change, the received knower is compelled to move forward and begin to listen to herself.

The subjective knower. In contrast to silent women and received knowers, subjective knowers conceive of truth as personal, private, and subjectively known or intuited. There is a shift from passivity into action and from a view of self as static to one of self as becoming. These women still hold the conviction that there are right answers, but truth now resides within the person and she can negate answers that the outside world provides. Although the subjective knower experiences a loss of trust in traditional authority, she often prefers to merely observe rather than reveal to others that she sometimes feels critical of their ideas. "Subjectivism is for women a position from which they redefine the nature of authority. It is the position at which their views of experts and expertise undergo a radical change. The orientation to authority shifts from external to internal.

In this view, truth is an intuitive reaction. Rather than being something that is thought out, it is something that is experienced -- something felt rather than actively pursued or constructed. These women do not see themselves as constructors of truth, but as conduits through which truth emerges. As such, they argue against those authorities whom social institutions often promote as holding the keys to the truth, but they haven't yet developed their own authorial voice.

The procedural knower. The move into procedural knowledge as a way of knowing is striking in its difference from the preceding categories. At this stage, which may occur when a woman enters higher education, there is acknowledgment that intuitions may deceive; that gut reactions can be irresponsible and no one's gut feeling is infallible; that some truths are truer than others; that they can know things they have never seen or touched; that truth can be shared; and that expertise can be respected.

Knowledge is conceived of as a process. Procedural knowers "... believe that each of us looks at the world through a different lens, that each of us construes the world differently. They are interested not just in *what* people think but in *how* people go about forming their opinions and feelings and ideas" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 97). Procedural knowledge engages critical reasoning more than does subjective knowledge. In contrast to subjective knowers, who see what they want to see and listen only to their own inner voice, objective knowers pay attention to objects in the external world. They have learned that the inner voice is not always truthful.

Knowing involves the process of close observation and analysis. "Procedural knowers are practical, pragmatic problem solvers....They are trying, with more or less success, to take control of their lives in a planned, deliberate fashion." As one of the subjects in the study says, "I think everything out, and I want to make sure I understand exactly what's going on before I do anything" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 99). Still, during this stage, other voices and external truths are dominant.

The constructed knower. The fifth and final category is that of constructed knowledge. The move into this category is a result of the desire to connect reason with intuition -- to construct *one's own way of knowing.* At the crux of this constructivist way of knowing is the insight that *"All knowledge is constructed, and the knower is an intimate part of the known"* (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 137). At this position the knower understands "that truth is a matter of the context in which it is embedded" (p. 138). This understanding has a significant impact on how the knower perceives even the most rudimentary knowledge. "Once knowers assume the general relativity of knowledge, that their frame of reference matters and that they can construct and reconstruct frames of reference, they feel responsible for examining, questioning, and developing the systems that they will use for constructing knowledge. Question posing and problem posing become prominent methods of inquiry..." (p. 139). The woman at the constructivist stage claims her own voice and makes the effort to combine her intuitive knowledge with knowledge learned from others.

Perhaps one of the most relevant characteristics of this position is the distinction constructivists make between "really talking" and didactic talk. In didactic talk there is no effort on the part of participants to arrive at some new understanding from the shared experiences of others. In contrast "really talking" involves intensely listening because there is the implied agreement that the intent of the discussion is to contribute to the growth of emergent ideas. For constructivists, conversation involves dialogue and exploration, talking and listening, questions, argument, speculation, and sharing. They make the point that although the ways of knowing scheme that results from their study may be a developmental model, it is not a sequential one. Women do not necessarily move through the positions they describe in a linear, ordered manner. We found that to be the case with the recursive course of change over time in Kris's ways of knowing.

KRIS: TRACING ONE YOUNG WOMAN'S DEVELOPMENT

This paper traces the intellectual development, of Kris, a white female who was a student in the combined literature/history class described by Miller (1997). Specifically, we trace Kris's development using Belenky and colleague's five different phases or ways of knowing as an explanatory lens. We believe that Kris's work in this course demonstrates the educational power of narrative writing and personal experience to create empathy between one's self and the experience of those who lived not only in a different time but in cultures representing different customs, beliefs, and social classes. It is this empathetic tie that serves as the force which guides Kris to critical and narrative thinking and through the different ways of knowing. It is the joining of her empathetic feeling with her ability to think critically and reflectively that transcends mere knowledge of history and experience, in that it contributes to an understanding of that which makes us human and, perhaps, merges the boundaries of what <u>is</u> with those of what <u>can be</u> in our world.

Reclaiming a Silenced Voice

We will be following this recursive process along the way as Kris recognizes and formulates her own realities through her developing critical awareness of the relationship between self and culture. In order to more fully appreciate her journey, it is important to have a sense of where Kris has been. Throughout the term of the course she discloses (in her journals, during class discussion, and in interviews) some of the most salient and painful experiences of her life. She writes in poetry and journal entries about the sexual abuse inflicted upon her by her father, and in her essays she describes the times when he beat her mother and made threats to burn them all in their beds if she attempted to leave him.

In one of her papers for this class, Kris reflects upon why she chose to share these experiences with her teachers and fellow classmates:

> I told them about myself...I wasn't afraid to tell others about my abusive, dysfunctional family. After all, it has made me into the strong young lady I am now. I wanted to show others that they don't have to hide behind masks anymore... to share your life is not only enriching to others, but to yourself.

During her final interview, Kris reveals that, when she was younger, she went through a period of silence -- a time when she and her twin sister stopped talking to anybody but each other. Not

until she read Maya Angelou's autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,* in which she writes about ceasing to speak as an effect of rape, did Kris know that anyone else "knew what we knew, [who] felt what we felt. ... that was the first time. It was so incredible to me and it meant so much to me."

The dialogic opportunities to respond to and share meanings about literature within the context of history and personal narrative seem to have been a major contributing factor in Kris's developing voice and increased critical thinking. In addition, the social context and structure of the classroom itself, as mediated by the teachers and students alike, significantly contributed to the openness of multiple views and voices in class discussions. The classroom, as well as the course content, had the effect of assisting Kris in recognizing her ability create change in her own life and to evolve toward more complex ways of knowing. Kris confirms this notion when she writes:

> The most helpful thing during this class was the atmosphere in which it is safe to express your views without the fear of rejection. In other classes I was afraid to say certain things in fear that I would be laughed at. Because of the community we have I can say what ever I want without any fear.... now I say whatever I want even when I'm not inside of the classroom. I'm not one bit afraid of expressing my views, and my individuality to anyone.

The class context, then, as well as the course content and activities, helped Kris to transform her ways of thinking and knowing.

At the same time, Kris exhibits characteristics of Belenky et al.'s "subjective knower." She is critical and suspicious of traditional authority and has decided that she cannot trust the answers that have been provided her from an outside world.

In her final interview, she acknowledges that this is a shift from her earlier perspective at the beginning of the course (perhaps that of the received knower). In fact, a journal entry from the beginning of the school year reflects her concern that her own voice is silenced as she listens to others speak.

> Sometimes I feel like I don't have anything to say about anything, and that bothers me a whole lot because people say it for you. So you can't make arguments for yourself. Like I always say, okay, I believe this, and like wait a minute, no I don't. And if somebody is already telling me the other side of it, I have nothing to talk about.

Perhaps it is this discomfort which causes her to reevaluate the way she makes sense of the texts

she reads and comment that "I don't take anything as truth anymore." She uses the analogy of her sister who, when she is at a restaurant, always assumes that the reason why the waitress inquires about their satisfaction with their meal is because she has poisoned it and is waiting for them to die. According to Kris, she now thinks of what she reads in that same context -- as potentially poisonous. She illustrates the way she feels with the following example:

> I don't trust what people are telling me anymore. There was one thing that I couldn't believe...our government sells drugs in other countries.... Ever since that day, I learned that I can't trust our government. I don't believe a word of anything that comes out of the politicians' mouths, at all. Not one word of it.

As Kris speaks in a disillusioned voice, we sense that this initial exploration of truth is still very much a personal venture, which is indicative of the subjective knower. She speaks from an intuitive feeling for what is right and wrong. Truth is something that is felt rather than pursued or constructed. Those of Kris's comments which indicate that she is distrustful of both what she reads and the ways in which government represents the truth signal that she is in a position of questioning traditional authority. However, although she has begun to understand the subjective nature of truth, she does not yet see herself as a constructor of truth.

The following journal entry stands in stark contrast to the earlier passage where Kris proclaims that she sometimes feels as if she has nothing to say; it represents considerable growth on Kris's part. She wrote this entry following a rough draft of her poem, *Moons of Jupiter*, which is about sexual abuse. Here, she acknowledges the importance of listening to one's own intuitive voice. However, there is no indication of the need to combine this voice with those provided by the outside world in constructing knowledge. This stance is characteristic of the subjective knower.

> I don't feel helpless. I think that people have voices and they should listen to them once in a while because it tells them things. My voices tell me that I'm alright and that I survived the explosion that killed so many others in the fire.

Although, at this point, Kris perceives truth to be personal and subjectively known, unlike others at the subjective phase of knowing, she is not private or silent regarding her conceptions of truth. On the contrary, she often will verbalize her critical feelings of others' ideas.

It isn't until further into the year that she is aware that fellow students listen to her. She says of this realization, "It became something where I wouldn't just have them listen to me, I'd try to teach them something.... I don't want to look smart. I want you to know that you're smart." This concern for knowledge as something that is shared is characteristic of Belenky et al.'s

"constructed knower." In this phase, Kris is eager to engage in conversation where the intent is to create understanding and meaning rather than to just talk, which does not necessarily imply mutual engagement between conversants. That is, she sees the intent of discussion and the sharing of experiences as contributing to the intellectual growth of all. It involves questioning and argument rather than just holding the floor and talking.

In an interview at the end of the school year, her teachers spoke about the way that Kris was willing to share her personal history with the class in the opening weeks of school, even though her story was often one of physical and emotional abuse. One of her teachers commented, "I'm drawn to Kris...part of it is her passion about a lot of things. (She) had such an open honesty. She just opened herself up to the class on several occasions. I mean, really took some incredible risks." They commented on the fact that she said that her revelations were not made for her, but rather with the intention that someone else would learn from them. "It was almost like she came into the class with the conception of herself as a teacher. Like she had a lot to teach."

Reaching Toward Connectedness: Kris's Emerging Voice

As we read and reread Kris's work and related materials, we began to recognize three major phases in the development of Kris's voice over the school year. These phases seem to dovetail with her construction of knowledge as outlined by Belenky, et al. (1986), and we will make these links as we discuss each of the phases. These recursive phases are: 1) an emerging insight into the **mutuality of lived experience** and the accompanying empathy and anger she feels toward the social injustice and apathy she perceives as part of the human condition; 2) her search for **explanations and consequences** of social injustice; and 3) recognition of herself as an **agent of change** in a diverse world. It is important to note that these are not discrete phases but rather are recursive in nature. In fact, her anger, which we will suggest is the initial force that spurs her thinking, is apparent throughout her writing. Kris's strong feelings give voice to her own experiences and stories that in the past she had not been able to articulate or define. Her anger derives, in part, from her personal identification with the heretofore silenced voices she comes to know in the literature she reads for the class.

Angry Empathy and Reflection

Kris's journey of self-awareness and social consciousness began with her feelings of empathy.

She began to question the world and the word around her as the result of her strong emotional response to the injustice she discovers. It is the braiding of literature with history, the dialogic between content and context, that gave rise to the empathy which led to intellectual and social growth. In her final interview, Kris was asked to talk about the way in which she has changed over the year. She responded,

> I was always opposed to the oppression of women, the oppression of African Americans, Native Americans, and so on, but until you learn these things, it sets a fire inside you, you just want to scream, and you just want to go outside and scream so loud, everybody is so disgusting, a lot of the time, and it just, it got to a point where I was taking in so many things, and I was getting so passionate about everything, that I would leave the classroom, and I would have so much on my mind, I just think I gotta save the world, I have to do something, I have to do something.

From her response, it is clear that Kris makes a distinction between her previous awareness of oppression as a concept, and understanding the reality of oppression by feeling its real consequences on lived lives. She stresses that it is this felt understanding of oppression that "sets a fire inside you." Kris feels this strong emotional connection because, in her aesthetic transaction with the texts (Rosenblatt, 1978), the boundaries between the characters she reads about and her own lived experience are blurred. She becomes more than a passive observer; rather, she has entered into their lives and so is consciously aware of the potentialities of her own life.

For example, in the same interview she relates her reaction to Lutie Johnson, a character in *The Street*, and the way in which people in the story blamed her because she was a single mother. "But we didn't hear once the blame go on the father, who left the woman and her child.... And that made me angry because...I feel like sexism is so invisible in society...people just blurt out awful things about women, without even thinking about it, because its been chiseled into their heads." Kris clearly identifies sexism here, not as an individual failing, but as socially constructed yet "invisible in society," where what is "chiseled into their heads" shapes what people unconsciously "blurt out." Kris is aware of the play of social voices in the text, too, hearing the blaming voices opposing Lutie's own voiced experience.

It is a literary text, the narrative story of one woman, then, that angers Kris and causes her to reflect on the nature of sexism in society. In her formal essay about this novel she writes:

> Isn't that what society is out to do. Rape our women; rape them of their pride, humanity, and human rights.... When men are aggressive it is considered an asset

> but when women have similar qualities they are bitchy. What if gender roles were switched around and men were looked upon as inferior?...These things stem from something greater than race, or sex. Possibly despair, a hope for something better with a readiness to push anyone out of your way to get ahead.... Despair very possibly may be the reason why hate has been such a common feeling since the beginning of time. People are so wrapped up in taking themselves seriously in order to get out of uncertainty they don't take the time to understand the thing that makes this world so rich; diversity. When we fail to recognize what is different we can't begin to understand, but we can harbor a fear of it.

Kris earlier refers to Lutie's rape in the book, and her choice, in this example, of using the verb "rape" as a metaphor to explain society's violence toward women suggests her anger and sense of injustice. She makes a general observation about the opposing ways in which society views aggression in men and women. But then something interesting happens. Her anger moves her forward and causes her to think about the social forces which might motivate sexism and racism. She speculates that uncertainty and despair are root causes of hate and of greed, "a readiness to push anyone out of your way to get ahead." She says that a possible effect of people becoming so involved with themselves is that they don't recognize or understand diversity and, as a result, begin to "harbor a fear of it."

This reflection represents a critical juncture in Kris's intellectual development for a few reasons. First, she does not dwell in her anger as someone at the subjective phase of knowing might do. Instead, the anger she feels spurs her process of reflecting, questioning, and seeking answers. However, her anger is not the direct cause of this process. This is a significant point because it is important to understand that her anger alone doesn't motivate her growth--it motivates her rethinking. Dewey discusses this notion of reflective thinking as "(1) a state of doubt, hesitation, perplexity, mental difficulty, in which thinking originates, and (2) an act of searching, hunting, inquiring, to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the perplexity" (Dewey, 1933, p. 12). The mental difficulty here for Kris is sharply drawn in her metaphorical appropriation of a scene from the novel to describe sexism in society. She seeks after a more comprehensive explanation for human behaviors than sexism or racism, and finds some tentative coherence in her account of human uncertainty and greed breeding self-involvement and fear. It is a solid piece of abstract thinking, prompted by the concrete puzzlement the story posed and her own further inquiry into the nature of felt experience.

A second critical point in Kris's writing about *The Street* is this: it is her rethinking that moves Kris closer to constructed knowledge, the final phase in Belenky's system (Ashton-Jones & Thomas, 1990). Kris begins to understand that her frame of reference matters and that she can be responsible for constructing it. This knowledge enables her to examine and question--to

construct (that is, to take on) modes of inquiry that simultaneously prompt and signal her developing voice. Let's return to the quoted portion of her formal essay, where she poses a question of herself ("Isn't that what society is out to do?") and presents an elaborated metaphorical answer, with repetition ("Rape our women; rape them of their pride, humanity, and human rights?"). Her question formulates society (not a man or even men) as a culprit and constructs a rhetorically powerful answer. Instead of working out the persuasive details of that position, though, she makes a dialectical move to examine the differential language for describing men and women, uncovering this tool which "invisibly" (she said earlier) constructs us beyond our consciousness. She seems to intuit that "These things stem from something greater than race, or sex," then seeks further answers tentatively ("Possibly despair"), an unusual path of explanation. Finally, recognizing the potential source of hate in the the need for certainty and sameness suggests her seeds of insight. Kris is in a reflective dialogue with herself here and beginning to see that others are alienated from dialogue, which could help them "begin to understand."

Bruner (1986) has argued that this aesthetic or narrative mode of understanding Kris experiences functions to "open us to dilemmas, to the hypothetical, to the range of possible worlds that a text can refer to...Literature subjunctivizes, makes strange, renders the obvious less so, the unknowable less so as well ...Literature, in this spirit, is an instrument of freedom" (p. 159). In the integrated class, though, literature as "an instrument of freedom" gained power because the class situated texts within their social-historical contexts. As literature provided understanding of the human consequences of public events, at the same time history provided the sociocultural public context for personal experience and action. The teachers felt that history and literature were "wonderful subjects around which we can look at how people live their lives and make decisions about how we're going to live our lives." They aimed for students to situate themselves in the world of public events and private lived experience in order to develop a way of living in the future. To this end, Sharon hoped for an "ongoing dialogue of history and stories and events" in the class.

This dialogue of history and story and events was evident in a mock trial the class held in which Christopher Columbus was the defendant; this was the class project which Kris said caused her to think most deeply. Columbus was put on trial for genocide, environmental destruction, destruction of an indigenous culture, kidnaping, and theft; Kris acted as a prosecuting attorney in the simulation, which included research, reading, trial preparation, and actual dramatized trial. Columbus was found guilty of all charges with the exceptions of genocide and environmental destruction. While the students were preparing for the trial, they read fiction and historical biography by and about Native Americans. As Kris reads and responds

in her journal, it is evident that she looks through diverse others' eyes (Greene, 1993) and is moved by the plight of the Native American as told through such texts as *Lakota Woman, Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee,* and *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*. Kris initially responds by expressing feelings of anger, hate, and sadness. In the following quote from her final interview, we can see her empathetic understanding of these narratives in their social-historical contexts as the impetus for her critical reflection. Significantly, she speaks about the reasons for her emotional responses, and her language is laden in a sense of personal connectedness to a culture and a way of life that has virtually been eradicated. It is this connectedness which leads her to think about the authenticity of history as she had learned it and to recognize her own commonality with voices ostensibly different:

> I just started getting really angry...everybody was like, 'Okay, yeah Columbus, we're here because of Columbus,' and I hated Columbus that day. And I thought, well maybe you guys should notice the fact that Columbus invaded these people's land and it wasn't just the fact that he had done that, but the people behind it...I got really sad about the fact that I missed out on so much because of him and because all these things were destroyed. The culture...these people were killed because they were who they were. And I could just picture me getting killed for who I was. And I thought about it a lot. ...everybody in the world one day is going to be in the Nazi's place, and they're gonna be in the Jew's place, they're gonna be in the African American's place and my place now. ...they're gonna want somebody to say this is wrong. And I think it takes you to be put in that place for you to say, 'look at this. I have to do something.' And I think that helped me to understand I have a place and have to do something.

Kris is angry that her fellow students do not seem to recognize that Columbus's invasion involved more than land, but more important, "the people behind it." Her critical voice finds expression because the personal narrative, the story of the people, matters to her. She is saddened by the fact that she will never experience this culture for herself and that the Native Americans were killed simply because they existed. At this point, Kris moves beyond her anger and sadness and thinks about the implications of this history. She recognizes the human consequences of what happened more than 500 years ago when she writes, "I missed out on so much ...because all these things were destroyed." She empathizes with those who were destroyed when she pictures herself being killed for who she is. These images cause her to "think about it a lot." Further, Kris contemplates that at some point, each of us will be either in the position of the oppressor or the oppressed and, if we are one of the oppressed, we will want someone to "say this is wrong." She transcends the past as narrated by those who lived centuries ago and looks at the multiple perspectives of both the oppressors and the oppressed of more modern times when she

writes about being in the Nazi's place, the Jew's place, the African American's place, and even "my place now."

Like the procedural knowers in Belenky's study, Kris recognizes that the world is constructed differently for different people and she analyzes, or thinks through, what she has learned from these different perceptions. She begins to question not only *what* people think and do but *why,* and she will eventually move this critical thinking process to a new phase when she begins to use this insight to construct her own way of knowing.

The educative power of the common ground Kris feels with various ethnic and cultural groups is elaborated on in *Stories Lives Tell*, in which Witherell and Noddings (1991) talk about the importance of the caring relation in education. Their use of this term "assumes a relational, or connective, notion of the self, one that holds that the self is formed and given meaning in the context of its relations with others" (p. 5). Kris's development of this caring relationship enables her to recognize the common ground between herself and others and contributes to a definition of herself in relation to other groups and cultures. Kris learns to define her own ideas of knowledge and truth through the mutuality of connection and care. She develops a relationship with the people whose experiences she is reading and this aids her in situating their experience, as well as her own, in social-historical context. In other words, her critical reflection about their experience challenges her to a new self-representation, one in which she begins to renegotiate the boundaries between herself and others in society.

Her critical reflection on these feelings from the vantage point of the end of the school year causes Kris to realize that this experience helped her to "understand I have a place and have to do something." Kris's empathy with the different cultural and ethnic groups above indicates not only a concern for the situation of others, but also the assumption of responsibility for taking her place as a "constructor of change." The connections she discovers between herself and others brings her to new understandings of her own historical narrative.

Perhaps Kris is willing to share her story because she understands, through the personal narratives the class has read, the ability of the narrative voice to recognize previously silenced perspectives and to test what has been previously assumed to be true against actual lived experiences. This, as we will later argue, is a necessary component to her emerging recognition of herself as subject, not object, which, in turn, is a precondition to her perception of herself as an agent of change.

Kris at an Intellectual Crossroads: Her Search for Explanations and Consequences

As illustrated above, Kris's intense anger toward perceived social injustice and apathy led her to wonder at the transgressions of racism and sexism. Eventually, she begins to turn her disbelief and her somewhat rhetorical "why" questions into a sincere and interested search for the causes and effects of the injustice which angers her. As is common to those who construct knowledge by listening to their own voice and also reflecting critically on the voices of others, Kris begins to formulate answers that make sense to her by posing critical questions and problems for discussion. She has begun the process of learning that knowledge can be reconstructed to accommodate both what the outside world provides and what she knows, or intuits, to be true.

For example, during a discussion about whether or not mainstream history textbooks are biased in their interpretation of events the class is divided between whether or not textbooks should present only the "straight facts" or if they should include stories of the people. One student, Andy, states that he believes texts should "be straight facts." Kris responds, "This is for Andy...just wondering, if you were in a concentration camp and someone was writing about that in a history book, wouldn't you want the story of the people in there (the camp) to be in the book?"

What is significant here is not only what Kris has said but that she frames her remarks in the form of a question, which suggests the dialogic nature of this conversation. Although we think it would be safe to say, based on what we already know about Kris, that she values the personal narrative, she has begun to also value hearing the voices of others. She uses question posing as a method of inquiry and makes the effort to combine her intuitive knowledge with knowledge learned from others.

In addition, what first appeared to be contradictions in the statements she makes regarding her experiences both in the course and with fellow classmates and in the way she constructs what she believes to be knowledge are, it seems, examples of Kris's intrapersonal discourse as she attempts to assimilate and make sense of the multiple perspectives she is now aware of. In a manner of speaking, she makes some "self-checks" as a way of trying on these new perspectives and reassessing where she is as a learner.

For example, during one of the interviews Kris talks about individual perception. She says, "The fact is that I see through my eyes and you see through your eyes and how can you help but not be self-absorbed?" Kris seems to mean that she believes it is possible to make interpretations of reality only from the lens of one's own experience. Yet, throughout her written text and comments during class discussion, she demonstrates remarkable concern and empathy with others, attempting to see through their eyes, as well.

The consequence of being at an intellectual crossroad is that, at times, she is not able to recognize that knowledge can come from the outside world and she pays attention primarily to her own inner voice. For example, in the following quote, Kris acknowledges that individuals have their own perspectives but, as is apparent in her statement below, she does not acknowledge the value of these multiple perspectives. Consequently, she is limited in her ability to integrate objective and subjective knowing and to use another person's vantage point as a tool for generating knowledge.

> You learn that everybody sees things in a different way. Even if I'm white and you are black...we can still see things differently but it's not because I'm white and you're black all the time. But it's because we're different people, but it's really frustrating when people don't see things the way you see it.

Perhaps the frustration she feels with this somewhat dualistic perspective provides the spur that moves her toward a more collaborative discourse. In her narrative self-evaluation she writes,

> I am learning so much about myself from being in this class. I have learned that I'm a strong person with strong opinions. I never saw myself as a person who could have effective arguments [sic] with people about things that I believe in. I have a new understanding of people from the class discussions we have had. They enabled me to see other points of view and consider them before I blatantly disagree.... The most important thing that I have learned is that I have a lot to learn. For the first time I am learning from other people instead of just copying notes from an overhead. The most important way to learn really is from other people's mistakes, triumphs, and your own.

Kris demonstrates remarkable insight in her efforts to think critically about the causes of injustice and its effects. For example, although she comments that she "hated" Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and that it was a "low point" for her, her discussion of the novel in her "American Dream" essay leads her to acknowledge the state of American education:

> One stand that Hester took was that she wanted something better for her child. So many people now want more for their children, but if we can't get past labeling one another nothing will be better for the next generation. Maybe if people wanted more for other people's children as well as their own something would be done to better society. Which leads me into the trial we did on education. It infuriates me that we as a society are so money hungry that we allow children to attend school in horrible conditions. People don't care about other people's children plain and simple. And as long as they are living the good life, who the hell cares if some

> African American child gets the raw end of the stick? Everything is alright as long as suburban eyes aren't touched by the picture of a child with no chance to succeed. This country thinks it is so much better than all of the others because we don't trap our people in caste systems. But if we don't have unbreakable class systems why is it so hard for a child from the ghetto to break out? It upsets me that people would even think for a minute that it is alright to have better standards in one school than the other.

Kris's comments regarding "labeling" and caste systems identify effects of racism and classism on education. She has clearly moved beyond reacting solely with anger (although anger is still very much evident in the tone of her voice) and is genuinely concerned about the reasons for injustice.

Her method for pursuing reasons is a dialogic one: she imaginatively puts languages in dialogue, to question one language or perspective through the eyes of another as a means of thinking critically about the world (Bakhtin, 1981). Here, for instance, she gives voice to what she sees as the limited "who cares" perspective of some suburbanites by drawing on her experiences with stories voiced during the trial simulation on educational funding. She is engaged in a critical-narrative thinking (Miller, 1997), posing critical questions and juxtaposing narrative voices in order to problematize monologic perspectives; out of this dialectic she is constructing sense provisionally in an honest coherence comprised of tensions and multiple possibilities. Critical-narrative discourse assumes multiple possible meanings constructed from multiple possible perspectives, and the need for constructing one's own meaning from this web of meanings, of social languages (Bakhtin, 1981). As Kris learned to move among these conflicting languages and meanings for the same event, she and other students were becoming conscious of silenced voices, of multiple perspectives, and the limits of monologic ways of knowing.

Agent of Change

Perhaps the most exciting transformation in Kris's voice is her recognition of herself as an agent of both self and societal change. The knowledge and new understanding she has gained from the class's critical reflection of dominant ideology leads her to an evaluation of her ability and authority to enact transformations in her own life as well as in the larger society.

For example, while preparing for the Columbus trial, students read articles that focused on Native American experience from the perspective of Native Americans. This reading of experience from a perspective other than the more mainstream, culturally dominant, European American experience deconstructs previously held understandings of history. One of the articles

was "Indian Country" by Peter Matthiessen. Kris responded to this reading in her journal:

> I can't understand why Native Americans were looked upon as savages! If anyone was savage it was the whiteman, who was greedy, immoral, disrespectful, and distrustful.... In order to achieve some kind of unity we must learn to respect other cultures. We have failed to respect the culture of Native Americans by using our hairsprays, chemicals, garbage, etc. to destroy their being, the environment. That's like robbing Christians of their bibles, burning down churches, and stealing their crucifixes and rosary beads.... Whites destroyed the Native Americans by literally building over their religion. I don't personally take responsibility for what happened, but I do take responsibility for my part in what happens now while I live and breath in a world corroded with racism. I try my hardest to fight the hatred of this world.

As we have seen exhibited in Kris's previous work, this response is an example of both her anger toward the perpetrators of this violence as well as her empathy for the lives that were destroyed. However, not only does she accept responsibility for what happens in the present; she also feels empowered to enact change -- "I try my hardest to fight the hatred of this world."

In the following example, Kris engages in dialogue with the author of a piece entitled "Gee, You Don't Seem Like an Indian From the Reservation" and in her response she resists the authoritative voice of the writer. This act alone constitutes a perception of herself as someone who can contribute to the development of ideas and knowledge. This indicates a move away from procedural knowledge, when external truths are still dominant, toward constructed knowledge. In her response, she speaks with a sense of authority as she disagrees with the writer.

> I felt as if the author was slaughtering all whites...I feel the need to speak out against racism, but slandering other races is not the answer.... Feeling sorry for ourselves isn't going to end the hating, it is going to strengthen it. If we feel bad about derogitory comments and oppression forced upon us,that's natural, but do something to end it... There will always be hating and white people didn't invent it. So in order to end it, we have to turn over a new leaf and begin by educating a new generation of people.And I will be more than happy to lead the way.

Clearly, in these examples Kris has begun to construct her own way of knowing, which is a hallmark of the fifth and final category defined by Belenky et al. -- that of constructed knowledge. At this stage, the knower understands that all knowledge is relative and is constructed through individual frames of reference. Kris claims her own voice when she examines, questions, and speculates upon the text. She engages in what Paulo Friere (1970) calls problem posing and through a blending of her own voice and outside knowledge, her own way of

knowing emerges.

Her sense of empowerment comes from Kris's realization that her frame of reference matters in the construction of knowledge. Earlier in this section we mentioned that, in addition to seeing herself as an enabler of social transformation she also has undergone a personal transformation -- one that she is well aware of. We believe that this personal transformation, along with her cognizance of it, contributes to Kris's journey forward toward a power of thought that is "not a mirror of reality, not a mere reflection, but is *reflexive and reflective* of reality" (Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 13). The following is her comment on her perception of how she works with groups and individuals in her class. It is also indicative of the contribution the work of the class has made to her:

> I really like to listen to other people and what their opinions are, and I like to change them. And I can see a big change from here and now to me, because..before I just wanted so much for people to listen to me, and I wanted them to believe what I believed. But now I kind of just want them to believe what they believe, and think about it.

Kris is writing about the change she has undergone from someone who only wanted others to hear her and then believe as she believes to someone who likes to listen to others and engage them in constructive argument. Perhaps most importantly, this dialogue with others is successful, according to Kris, not necessarily if people believe what she believes but rather if they think about what they believe.

This new insight on Kris's part represents an astounding level of intellectual development from the Kris who referred to herself earlier as someone who could never have effective arguments with people about things she believed in. In fact, we can clearly see her progress through several phases of knowing as described by Belenky et al. (1986).

Like the received knower, prior to this class Kris seemed at first to have little confidence in her own ability to speak and, although she recognized that words are central to the process of knowing, she still believed that truth comes from others.

Later, she expressed a need to have people listen to her exclusively. She was not interested in the voices and ideas of others. This corresponds to the subjective phase of knowing, although Kris did not exhibit all the characteristics of this phase. Like the subjective knower, Kris believed that truth resides within herself and that she can negate answers that the outside world provides. However, she was unlike the subjective knower in that she was willing to reveal her thoughts to others. Often, the subjective knower will elect to keep her ideas to herself rather than reveal her critical stance toward others' points of view.

Kris's desire to have others "believe what they believe, and think about it" moves her into procedural knowledge. She recognizes that truth can be shared and that expertise can be respected. She clearly is interested "not just in what people think but in how people go about forming their opinions and feelings and ideas" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 97). Kris's question posing, which is central to constructivist thinking, indicates her consideration for the context of particular situations and individuals rather than relying on mere generalization in her decision making. By the end of the year, Kris has claimed her own voice and combines her own intuitive knowledge with knowledge learned from others to construct her own meanings from the web of conflicting meanings and languages available for understanding the world.

One year after graduating from the integrated class, Kris volunteered to take part in a cross-class discussion among 17 students who had been in Sharon and Ron's integrated classes. In the lively conversation about multicultural education and the integrated class, Kris was an active participator. In her final retrospective comment about the influence of the class, she said:

> This class has changed my life. Sounds so corny, but it's true. It's true. I always thought that I was stupid, and that nobody thought that I had a worthwhile opinion, or anything like that, and it really made me feel better, and I think it made me a more educated person. I know when I go out into the world now, for example, I went to a rape crisis seminar and the county legislator is still calling me up on the phone and talking about me. It's changed my life. I grew as a writer. The things I'm writing now, I never would have thought I could have written. I also feel like, my life has changed because of all the different things that I have been exposed to here. The literature, the different opinions. I've always been a really, a big hot head, where I can't stand to argue with people, I had to push my idea on them. But now, I feel I can tolerate your opinion.

Kris sees herself as an active agent in the community and a constructor of meaning in her own life. She understands, in retrospect, how the reading, writing, and dialogue in the class prompted her growth but sees, too, how difficult to believe or "corny" it sounds to attribute so much to her work in the integrated class. She describes clearly, though, the journey she has taken: from the silence of feeling stupid and not worthwhile, to being a "hot head" who couldn't listen to others, and, finally, to accepting differences to act as "a more educated person" in the world.

DISCUSSION

Kris's writing over the year demonstrated that her lived-through aesthetic response to

personal narrative was intimately connected to her developing critical and narrative thinking (Coles, 1989; Bruner, 1986; Greene, 1988, 1993; Miller, 1997). She was becoming conscious that understanding, as Ron put it, is "more than just an *intellectual* process or task." The stories Kris encountered about the effects of oppression on individuals who are members of minority groups ignited deep passion in her. She was outraged as well as saddened by the pain others have experienced. Responding to multicultural literature in journals and discussions prompted Kris's sense-making by stimulating her attention to new dilemmas, alternative human possibilities, and the many-sidedness of the human situation in the landscape of action and mind (Bruner, 1986; Langer, 1990, 1992, 1995). Because she connected her experience to others, she seemed to understand that words such as racism, sexism, and oppression are much more than abstract concepts, but have real consequences for those who suffer these injustices and have real social-historical roots which people need to understand. Kris was developing "a critical subjectivity that shows genders, classes, and races in dialogue rather than in opposition" (Bauer & McKinstry, 1991).

The focus of the integrated class on listening to and validating the marginalized and silenced voices of oppressed and minority groups provided Kris with a space where her own voice could be heard and acknowledged. This validation, in turn, allowed her to discover that she can be a source of knowledge as well as make determinations about knowledge derived from outside sources. It is the recognition of this power within herself which allowed her to become an active participant in self-directed change and growth in her own life and to redefine herself as an agent of change in society.

If this is true, and we believe it is, it carries important implications for the ways in which academic discourse and pedagogy either assist or hinder a student's ability to shape a sense of self in society. We need to begin to question the ways in which traditional classroom discourse and curriculum may operate to sacrifice certain student voices to a more culturally mainstream social order.

Our contention is that Kris moves through the various ways of knowing and constructing knowledge and begins to question and critique dominant paradigms of knowledge and authority because she discovers connections between herself and others. As both a teller and receiver of personal stories, she comes to a new self-representation and a renegotiation of boundaries between herself and others which results, over time, in her move towards a constructivist way of knowing, that is, the integration of subjective and objective knowledge.

Through the literature the students read, the writing they completed, and the classroom activities they engaged in, dominant perceptions of truth were held up against lived experience. Kris's anger and empathy, her questioning, and her desire to enact change in her own life and the

lives of others was directly rooted in the incongruence she perceived between the two. Perhaps even more significantly, through personal narrative, she discovers "connections between self and others, [she] penetrates barriers to understanding and come[s] to know more deeply the meaning of ... her own historical and cultural narrative" (Witherell, 1991, p. 94).

These findings suggest that as teachers concerned about education as a transformative practice, we need to provide students with opportunities for self-reflexive critiques regarding issues of race, class, gender, and ethnicity. As we work toward a more multicultural curriculum, reflexive practice can assist students in interpreting their construction of knowledge to encompass the diversity of experiences, perspectives, and social interests that comprise the American quilt. As Kris's work demonstrates for us, providing opportunities for dialogue where students learn to make meaningful connections between literature, their own lives, and social historical contexts can create a transformative pedagogy that is responsive to students. As a result, they begin to develop truths that are relevant and valuable to them. We think that what is central to Kris's work and the work of this paper is our recognition of the emergence of her *conscious* understanding of the way she encounters the world and her developing ability to transcend and reveal cultural ideologies that operate to suppress herself and others in a democratic society.

Kris's change results from a pedagogy that values the lived experience of others and creates space for dialogue and connectedness. Narrative and dialogue can be a powerful paradigm for teaching and learning. It allowed Kris the space to discover the power of her own voice, to locate herself within a social and cultural context and, over time, to engage in dialogue with society. When she learns to use her voice in these ways, she becomes subject rather than object.

The pedagogy of this classroom and its curriculum served to construct knowledge as multilayered and evolving rather than objective and static. It challenges us to rethink not only how knowledge is created, but also what knowledge is and who creates it. In the process of rethinking, we can begin to create a learning environment that opens up spaces for the unexpressed voices and perspectives that remain silent in our classrooms.

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